



National Business Center

Government Shared Service Provider

News Release

Contacts: Terri Raines

Phone: 703-390-6624

Fax: 703-390-6781

E-mail: Terri_R_Raines@nbc.gov

For immediate Release: 6/14/2006

"Helirappel" Program Operational In Grand Canyon National Park

DOI multi-Bureau Agreement and Certification Facilitated by Interior's NBC Aviation Management Directorate

WASHINGTON - The Department of the Interior's (DOI) National Business Center (NBC) Aviation Management Directorate is pleased to announce the completion of training and certification of National Park Service rappellers and contract helicopter pilots, in support of the establishment of an operational "helirappel" program in Grand Canyon National Park. In addition to other uses, the "helirappel" program allows for the emergency insertion of rescue personnel and firefighters in areas unsuitable for aircraft landing.

Training and certification exercise participants included personnel from the National Park Service, the National Forest Service, and commercial contract helicopter pilots. The coordination of this effort, and the completion of the letter of approval, that made it possible, was facilitated by NBC's Aviation Management Directorate (AMD). Additionally, AMD inspectors were on-site during the training, evaluation and certification stages of the program.

The mission of AMD, formally known as the DOI Office of Aircraft Services prior to its merger with the NBC in 2001, is to "Raise the safety standards, increase the efficiency, and promote the economical operation of aircraft activities in the Department of the Interior". Two of AMD's functions in this capacity are developing and implementing an aviation user-training



News Release

program to meet Department-wide and specific bureau needs; and furnishing technical assistance for specialized aviation problems.

Michael Ebersole, of the Grand Canyon National Park, summed up this collaborative effort in stating, “We sincerely thank the U.S Forest Service personnel from the Kaibab and Coronado National Forests, from Region 3, and from the Missoula Technology Development Center for their assistance, as well as the staff from DOI’s Aviation Management Directorate (in Boise and Phoenix) who helped the park successfully complete this final step.”

This initial Grand Canyon “helirappeler” program was inaugurated through the approved use of the Bell 407 helicopter. It will later be expanded through additional collaborative efforts to include the certification of the MD 900 helicopter. According to Ebersole, “We (the NPS at Grand Canyon) look forward to continuing our work with AMD in achieving certification of the MD 900 helicopter, which we hope will occur in another couple of months.” The new GCNP program also provides the opportunity to implement the Grand Canyon National Park/Kaibab National Forest “Helitack Interaction Plan”, which encourages more interaction between forest and park aviation personnel.